English 395M:
Re-Reading the American South in Literature and Film

Spring 2014 (#36357)
Monday 6-9 pm
MEZ 2.102

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Course Description
In recent years the study of the literature and culture of the U.S. South has been reinvigorated by a wholesale reassessment of the region’s place in the world. Drawing on the methodological tools of comparative cultural history, postcolonial and globalization theories, and indigenous, transnational, and global south studies, the “New Southern Studies” has reimagined both its objects of study and its fields of inquiry. This course seeks to re-read the South by the light of these new critical energies. Although the course will revisit a number of foundational southern texts—William Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, Victor Fleming’s Gone with the Wind, Elia Kazan’s A Streetcar Named Desire, Flannery O’Connor’s short fiction, and John Boorman’s Deliverance—its emphasis will be on recent and contemporary southern literature and film. Along the way, we will consider representations of plantation life, slavery, and the Civil War; rural poverty and “aberrant” sexualities; Civil Rights and interracial relations; and immigration and the remapping of region. Of both literary and filmic texts, we will ask, again and again, who defines the South and to what ends?

Course Objectives
This course will: model methods of literary and cultural interpretation; help students to improve their critical thinking, reading, and writing skills; emphasize opportunities for research and pedagogical innovation; and offer an idiosyncratic survey of the literature of the twentieth- and twenty-first century U.S. South.

Course Requirements and Evaluation Method
Participation (10% of final grade)
Students are expected to be active participants in class discussions. (This is, after all, a graduate seminar.) Among other things, you will also be asked to contribute to a course tumblr page. Attendance is mandatory; please let me know in advance if you need to miss a class meeting.

Book Review (30% of final grade)
Each student will produce a 4- to 6-page review of a scholarly book. You will be asked to present your review to your colleagues, both in class and on the course Canvas site.

Symposium Presentation (50% of final grade)
The course will culminate in a symposium at which students will make fifteen- to twenty-minute presentations of original research.
Prospectus (10% of final grade)

Following the symposium, students will produce a short prospectus for an article-length expansion of their presentation. NB: I am open to discussing alternative final projects for students in other disciplines.

Course Texts

Books

- Randall Kenan, Let the Dead Bury Their Dead (1993) (Harcourt Brace: 978-0156505154)
- Cynthia Shearer, The Celestial Jukebox (2005) (Georgia: 978-0820328386)
- Jesmyn Ward, Salvage the Bones (2011) (Bloomsbury: 978-1608196265)

Films

- Victor Fleming, et al, Gone with the Wind (1939)
- Elia Kazan, A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)
- Richard Brooks, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1958)
- John Boorman, Deliverance (1972)
- Tate Taylor, The Help (2011)

Additional Recommended Texts:

- Amy Villarejo, Film Studies: The Basics, Second Edition (Routledge, 2013)

All books are available at the Co-Op, 2246 Guadalupe; additional materials are available via Canvas.
Course Schedule

Key:

A. Required primary text(s)
B. Required secondary text(s)
C. Recommended reading
D. Books for review

Week One: 13 January

Introduction: What We Talk About

A. Rodney Jones, “Elegy for the Southern Drawl” (Canvas)

B. Edward Ayers, “What We Talk about When We Talk about the South” in Edward Ayers, et al, All over the Map: Rethinking American Regions (Johns Hopkins, 1995) (Canvas)

C. Houston Baker and Dana D. Nelson (eds.), “Special Issue: Violence, the Body, and ‘the South’” American Literature 73.2 (2001)

Deborah Barker and Kathryn McKee (eds.), American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary (Georgia, 2011)


Jennifer Rae Greeson, Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature (Harvard, 2010)

Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith (eds.), South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture (LSU, 2007)

Michael Kreyling, Inventing Southern Literature (Mississippi, 1998)

Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer (eds.), “Special Issue: Global Contexts, Local Literatures: The New Southern Studies” American Literature 78.4 (2006)


Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn (eds.), Look Away!: The U.S. South in New World Studies (Duke, 2004)

D. None
Week Two: 27 January

**Old Souths I: “I dont. I dont...”**

A. William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*

B. Stephen Railton and Will Roark, *Absalom, Absalom! Interactive Chronology* (Canvas)


Edouard Glissant, *Faulkner, Mississippi* (Chicago, 2000)


Minrose Gwin, “The Silencing of Rosa Coldfield” in Hobson, 151-187


Dirk Kuyk, Jr., *Sutpen’s Design: Interpreting Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!* (Virginia, 1990)


-----. *Vision’s Immanence: Faulkner, Film, and the Popular Imagination* (Johns Hopkins, 2004)


Annette Trefzer and Ann J. Abadie (eds.), *Global Faulkner* (Mississippi, 2009)

D. None
Week Three: 3 February

**Old Souths II: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love**

A. Valerie Martin, *Property*

   Kara Walker, from *My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love* (Canvas)


   Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman’s World in the Old South* (Pantheon, 1984)


   Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (North Carolina, 1988)


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1 Michael P. Bibler Lecture: Friday 7 February 2014, CLA 1.302D, 4:30 pm
Week Four: 10 February

**Civil War Souths I: “Fiddle-dee-dee!”**

A. Victor Fleming, *Gone with the Wind*
   
   Flannery O'Connor, “A Late Encounter with the Enemy”


   
   Tom Brown, “Spectacle/Gender/History: The Case of *Gone with the Wind*” *Screen*, 49.2 (2008): 157-178

   Ruth Elizabeth Burks, “*Gone with the Wind*: Black and White in Technicolor” *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 21.2 (2004): 53-73

   Jim Cullen, *The Civil War in Popular Culture: A Reusable Past* (Smithsonian, 1995)

   Gary W. Gallagher, *Causes Won, Lost, and Forgotten: How Hollywood and Popular Art Shape What We Know about the Civil War* (North Carolina, 2008)

   Richard Harwell, “*Gone with the Wind*” as Book and Film (South Carolina, 1983; 1992)

   Margaret Higno, “Civil Wars and Sexual Territory” in Adrienne Munich (ed.), *Arms and the Woman* (North Carolina, 1989), 80-96.

   Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (Macmillan, 1936)

   Alice Randall, *The Wind Done Gone* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001)

   Darden Pryon (ed.), *Recasting: “Gone with the Wind” in American Culture* (Florida, 1983)


   David O. Selznick, *Memo from David O. Selznick: The Creation of “Gone with the Wind” and Other Motion Picture Classics, as Revealed in the Producer’s Private Letters, Telegrams, Memorandums, and Autobiographical Remarks* (Modern Library Movies, 2000)

   Helen Taylor, *Scarlett’s Women: “Gone with the Wind” and Its Female Fans* (Rutgers, 1989)


   Molly Haskell, *Frankly, My Dear: “Gone with the Wind” Revisited* (Yale, 2010)
Week Five: 17 February

**Civil War Souths II: Not Even Past**

A. Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard*

George Saunders, “CivilWarLand in Bad Decline” (Canvas)

Kevin Willmott, *CSA: The Confederate States of America*

B. David W. Blight, from *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, and the American Civil War* (Massachusetts, 2002) (Canvas)


Alice Fahs and Joan Waugh (eds.), *The Memory of the Civil War in American Culture* (North Carolina, 2004)


Trudier Harris, “Twenty-First-Century Slavery, or, How to Extend the Confederacy for Two Centuries Beyond Its Planned Demise” *Southern Cultures* 12.3 (2006): 89-94

Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (Vintage, 1999)

Michael Kreyling, *A Late Encounter with the Civil War* (Georgia, 2014)


D. Thadious M. Davis, *Southscapes: Geographies of Race, Region, and Literature* (North Carolina, 2011)

Week Six: 24 February

Rural Souths I: Good Country People

A. Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People"

John Boorman, Deliverance

Barry Hannah, “Water Liars” (Canvas)


James Dickey, Deliverance (Houghton Mifflin, 1970)

Steven G. Kellman, “All the World’s a Movie Set: Dickey’s Deliverance” South Carolina Review 26.2 (1994): 155-161

Robert Klevay, “‘He Tossed His Line Out Grimly’: Barry Hannah’s Literary Parables” Mississippi Quarterly 64.1-2 (2011): 129-147

Jennie Lightweis-Goff, “‘How Willing to Let Anything Be Done’: James Dickey’s Feminist Praxis” in William B. Thesing and Theda Wrede (eds.), The Way We Read James Dickey: Critical Approaches for the Twenty-First Century (South Carolina, 2009), 239-251


Cormac McCarthy, Child of God (Random House, 1973)

Danny L. Miller, Sharon Hatfield, and Gurney Norman (eds.), An American Vein: Critical Readings in Appalachian Literature (Ohio, 2005)


Henry D. Shapiro, Appalachia on Our Mind: The Southern Mountains and Mountaineers in the American Consciousness, 1870-1920 (North Carolina, 1978)


D. Melanie Benson, Disturbing Calculations: The Economics of Identity in Postcolonial Southern Literature, 1912-2002 (Georgia, 2008)
Week Seven: 3 March

**Rural Souths II: “Just places that are nice and calm and quiet.”**

A. Breece D’J Pancake, “Trilobites,” “A Room Forever,” and “The Salvation of Me” (Canvas)
   - Chris Offutt, “Sawdust” (Canvas)
   - David Gordon Green, George Washington
   - Ron Rash, “Hard Times” (Canvas)
   - Holly Farris, “Lockjaw” (Canvas)


   - Justin Horton, “Mental Landscapes: Bazin, Deleuze, and Neorealism (Then and Now)” *Cinema Journal* 52.2 (2013): 23-45

D. Emily Satterwhite, *Dear Appalachia: Readers, Identity, and Popular Fiction since 1878* (Kentucky, 2011)
Week Eight: 17 March

*Queer Souths I: The Kindness of Strangers*

A. Elia Kazan, *A Streetcar Named Desire*

   Richard Brooks, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*

B. None


   Kenneth Holditch and Richard Freeman Leavitt (eds.), *Tennessee Williams and the South* (Mississippi, 2002)


   Philip C. Kolin and Douglas B. Chambers (eds.), “Special Issue: The Legacy of Tennessee Williams” *Southern Quarterly* 48.4 (2011)


   Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947); *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955)


Week Nine: 24 March

**Queer Souths II: More Mundane Dreams**

A. Randall Kenan, *Let the Dead Bury Their Dead*

B. Sharon P. Holland, “Introduction: The Last Word on Racism” in *The Erotic Life of Racism* (Duke, 2012), 1-15 (Canvas)


Howard Cruse, *Stuck Rubber Baby* (Paradox, 1995)

Trudier Harris, *The Power of the Porch: The Storyteller’s Craft in Zora Neale Hurston, Gloria Naylor, and Randall Kenan* (Georgia, 1996)


Mab Segrest, *My Mama’s Dead Squirrel* (Firebrand, 1985)


Brock Thompson, *The Un-Natural State: Arkansas and the Queer South* (Arkansas, 2010)
Week Ten: 31 March

Civil Rights Souths I: Everything That Rises Must Converge


Ellen Douglas, Can’t Quit You, Baby

B. Flannery O’Connor, “Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction” (Canvas)

C. Jon Lance Bacon, Flannery O’Connor and Cold War Culture (Cambridge, 1993)


D. Patricia Yaeger, Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women’s Writing, 1930-1990 (Chicago, 2000)

Week Eleven: 7 April

**Civil Rights Souths II: One Day**

A. Ellen Douglas, *Can’t Quit You, Baby* (cont.)
   
   Jake Adam York, from “Inscriptions for Air” (Canvas)
   
   Kathryn Stockett, “In Her Own Words” (Canvas)
   
   Tate Taylor, *The Help*

B. Association of Black Women Historians, “An Open Statement to the Fans of *The Help*” (Canvas)

C. Philip Belcher, “More Than Tourists To Their Woe: Southern Poets of Atonement and the Cultural Legacy of Racism” *Southern Quarterly* 49.2-3 (2012): 10-36
   
   
   
   
   
   
   Duchess Harris, “Kathryn Stockett Is Not My Sister and I Am Not Her Help” (2011)
   
   
   Frank Stanford, *battlefield where the moon says i love you* (Mill Mountain/Lost Roads, 1977)
   

   
   C.D. Wright, *One with Others* (Copper Canyon, 2010)
Week Twelve: 14 April

**New Souths I: South to a Very New Place**

A. Cynthia Shearer, *The Celestial Jukebox*


Fred Hobson (ed.), *South to the Future: An American Region in the Twenty-first Century* (Georgia, 2002)

Wanda Rushing, *Memphis and the Paradox of Place: Globalization in the American South* (North Carolina, 2009)


James C. Cobb and William Stueck (eds.), *Globalization in the American South* (Georgia, 2005)


D. Martyn Bone, *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* (LSU, 2005)

New Souths II: Down Mexico Way

A. Cynthia Shearer, The Celestial Jukebox (cont.)
   Oscar Casares, Brownsville


C. Rolando Hinojosa, The Valley (Bilingual, 1983)
   Claire F. Fox, The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border (Minnesota, 1999)
   José David Saldívar, Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies (California, 1997)

D. José E. Limón, American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture (Beacon, 1998)
   Claudia Milian, Latining America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies (Georgia, 2013)
Week Fourteen: 28 April

New Souths III: “Do you know what it means....”

A. Jesmyn Ward, *Salvage the Bones* (2011)
   

B. None

C. Jessica Adams, Michael P. Bibler, and Cécile Accilien, (eds.) *Just Below South: Intercultural Performance in the Caribbean and the U.S. South* (Virginia, 2007)
   

   Dave Eggers, *What Is the What?* (McSweeney’s, 2006)

   ---., *Zeitoun* (McSweeney’s, 2009)

   Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (eds.), *Hemispheric American Studies* (Rutgers, 2007)

   Sharon Monteith, “Special Issue: Hurricane Katrina: Five Years After” *Journal of American Studies* 44.3 (2010)


   Natasha Trethewey, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast* (Georgia, 2010)


D. Katherine Renee Henninger, *Ordering the Facade: Photography and Contemporary Southern Women’s Writing* (North Carolina, 2007)


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2 Course Symposium: Monday 5 May 2014, CLA 1.302D, [time tbd]